THE SEVENTH DAY.

Monday, the 5th March 1928.

The Assembly met again at 11-30 A. M. on Monday the 5th March 1928.

104. Needs of Kuttanad.

MR. N. GOPALA PANICKAR (*Member, Ambalapuzha taluk, Group I*) said that a department should be organised as a branch of the Agricultural Department to look after the minor irrigation works in each taluk and for the conservation of the channels, canals etc., meant for the irrigation of the *Punja* fields in Kuttanad. Besides, agricultural boards should be established in order to work in conjunction with this department.

Among particular needs, those that required urgent attention were the following:—

(1) The Alleppey-Changanachery canal should be completed soon;

(2) The Takazhi-Ambalapuzha road should be metalled and widened and the bridges on it repaired;

(3) The construction of the Tiruvalla-Edathua road should be hastened;

(4) The Tiruvalla-Ambalapuzha road should be completed soon by opening the remaining portion of it from Edathua to Takazhi.

(5) The portions of the Pampa river at Talavadi and Kozhimukku should be deepened and straightened.

(6) Orders should be issued for collecting the rent on Kandukrishi lands only in the years of cultivation.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Gopala Panickar, in respect of your general suggestions with regard to important channels and canals and irrigation waterways, it is difficult of regulation by general rules. It can only be dealt with in respect of specific areas and particular items of work. In respect of all these, Government and the P. W. D. are trying to do all that they can in regard to the necessary improvements, but the effort must be spread over a considerable period of time.

With regard to the deepening of the Pampa river where it is shallow, the work between Kozhimukku and Talavadi has already been arranged for.

You suggest on a plan that a short canal extending about two furlongs will make a short cut to Alleppey and would save a lot of time and trouble. I shall have that proposal examined by the Chief Engineer.

Then you speak about the Tiruvalla-Ambalapuzha road. The construction of the road from Podiyadi to Edathua is in two sections, from Podiyadi to Neerettupuram and from Neerettupuram to Edathua. The work has already been half completed in the first section. The work in the other section has been started and will be finished as quickly as possible before the end of the year because there is provision in the budget for the current year.

In regard to the Karumadi-Ambalapuzha connection, it passes through difficult kari land and it is not an easy feat of engineering.

Then you come to a more difficult part of your representation, that is that Kuttanad punja lands should not be subject to payment of tax during the years they lie fallow. You know as well as I do that once upon a time these lands were governed by what is known as Sathia Kuravu, the system introduced during Col. Munro's time in 999 M. E. The system was more or less followed on the lines of the Ryotwari system obtaining in British India, by which lands were assessed on what the lands were expected to yield in a particular year. It varied from year to year. Consequently remission was given. The unworkability of the system was

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proved. Nobody complained more loudly than the ryot about the inapplicability of the system. It gave rise to oppression and malpractices. Therefore, when the settlement was introduced it was decided to work out the taxation system on average production, which duly took into account the fact that the lands were left uncultivated and fallow for a certain number of years. The ryots welcomed it. I am afraid if we revert to the old bad system again, it will give rise to complaints once more. In any case, if any change is to take place, it must await a general revenue settlement.

105. Needs of the Punja cultivators of Kuttanad.

MR. KORA THOMAS (*Member, Changanachery taluk, Group II*) said that the *punja* fields of Kuttanad were deteriorating year by year. The efforts of the Department of Agriculture to improve these lands had so far proved unsuccessful. With a view to improve these lands the member had the following suggestions to make :—

(1) Opening of a canal from the confluence of the Pampa and the Manimala rivers at Muttar to the Kidangara canal and from there to the Kumarankari canal. For want of such a channel, most of the silt and mud that came by the two rivers never reached farther than the fields at Muttar and in the neighbouring areas. The fields lower down the rivers could be improved by the opening of the proposed canal. Besides, the canal would furnish a short cut from Muttar to Kumarankari, which could now be reached only by a circuitous journey of six or seven miles. There was yet another advantage that could be gained by opening this canal. It would be a means of irrigating the large extent of paddy fields enclosed between the Changanachery canal, the Kidangara canal, the Chelayar, and the Kumarankari canal. Nor would the opening of the canal be a costly enterprise as its route lay largely through Kandukrishi lands, for which Government had to pay no cost of acquisition.

(2) Opening of the Kuttapuzha canal. This was a measure for which the people of two taluks, Changanachery and Tiruvalla, were clamouring for several years continuously, and its construction would be a blessing to the people of the two taluks.

(3) Opening of the Chalakal canal. This was a project of which Government themselves recognised the necessity and of which the work had already been begun, but which for some reason had been dropped.

(4) Supply of brushwood to punja cultivators for putting up bunds. Most of the lands from which brushwood used to be collected had been converted into rubber estates and the price of brushwood had consequently gone up very high. Government should therefore either supply the necessary brushwood to the cultivators or assign lands to them for growing it. In this connection the member also referred to the Government order prohibiting the removal of earth from Kandukrishi lands. Where bunds had to be put up for cultivating the fields, the removal of earth was absolutely necessary and he urged that it should be allowed.

(5) Appointment of an agricultural expert, and sale of manures. The Agricultural Department should educate the masses in the use of scientific manures. The use of such manures was sure to improve the productivity of the soil and to make annual cultivation possible. Besides this, for Kuttanad alone the member urged that an expert in agriculture should be appointed with a proper complement of subordinate staff. They should devote themselves solely to the improvement of paddy and cocoanut cultivation in Kuttanad ; they could also distribute on credit among the people manures which they could keep in store in their depots.

(6) Amendment of the Agricultural Loans Regulation. The Regulation should be so amended as to facilitate the issue of loans to cultivators who could not afford to furnish very big securities. It would be enough, in the alternative, if Land Mortgage Banks were instituted to help the cultivators.

(7) Abolition of toll on *vallams*. These *vallams* were very necessary in Kuttanad and to tax them was to tax one of the essentials of life. The boats themselves had risen in price considerably of late, and the tolls added to the burden.

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